



Office of Historic Alexandria
City of Alexandria, Virginia

Alexandria Times

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Out of the Attic

A view of Alexandria's crossroads

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Image: Aerial photo, 1949. Office of Historic Alexandria.



This aerial view, taken on March 4, 1949, shows the area around the eight-cornered intersection of King Street, Braddock Road and Quaker Lane just a few years before the annexation of this section of Fairfax County by the City of Alexandria.

Although this complicated crossroads continues to frustrate Alexandrians even today, the careful eye will note that at the time, there was no direct connection across King Street from South Quaker Lane to what is now the extension of North Quaker.

In 1949, the north side thoroughfare was named Seminary Road, which, although a duplicative name of Alexandria's east-west roadway to the south, linked the Episcopal Seminary with Arlington in a



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north-south direction. Alexandria motorists determined to reach the new Shirley Highway, just to the north, took their life in their hands as they dog-legged around the sharp corners, leaving traces of the dark rubber from their tires inevitably stained on the macadam.

Adjacent to the north side of King Street, running diagonally across the image, is the new Fairlington development in V-shaped area at the top, built to provide housing for workers at the nearby Pentagon. King Street was then the official boundary of Fairfax and Arlington counties, and a little over a century earlier marked the southwest edge of the diamond-shaped District of Columbia.

On the far right side of the image, the Fairlington shopping district is just visible. In the upper left hand corner is the former home of Robert E. Lee's cousin, Cassius Lee, known as "Menokin." Menokin is an Indian name meaning "sweet waters" and named after earlier Lee family estates, including that of ancestor Francis Lightfoot Lee, a signer of the Declaration of Independence who had lived near Warsaw, Va.

Cassius Lee restored the house and surrounding farm, which was severely damaged by Union troops during the Civil War, after he returned at war's end. The house remained a noted landmark and a regular stop on annual historic house tours until the early 1950s, when the farm was cleared to make way for a housing complex, the Minnie Howard School and the Bradlee Shopping Center.

The house itself was located in a small treed area between buildings along what are now Keller and Jay avenues. But the telltale signs of physical neglect at Menokin can clearly be seen by 1949, as its once fertile fields lay idle, filling in with brush and small trees as the site awaits its suburban transformation.

On the south side of Braddock Road, the roadway roughly in the center of the view running left to right, is Episcopal High School at the bottom, and the Oakland Baptist Church immediately adjacent to the King Street intersection. Both institutions are still standing, although greatly expanded, as the area's growth increased over time. In the lower right hand corner, where T.C. Williams High School stands today, is the school built through the partnership between Booker T. Washington and Chicago philanthropist Julius Rosenwald to educate African American children during the era of Jim Crow laws and segregation.

"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.

These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by Amy Bertsch, former Public Information Officer, and Lance Mallamo, Director, on behalf of the Office of Historic Alexandria.